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**Abstract**: The notion of 'professional practice knowledge' has been significant in some recent explorations of the nature of practice and discussions of the development of practitioners and practices. This article begins by outlining 'professional practice knowledge' as a window into practice, but suggests that practice has features that cannot be understood just from the perspective of knowledge 'in the heads' of individual practitioners. It suggests that practice has a number of extra-individual features that need to be elucidated. These include such features as being formed and conducted in social settings, shaped by discourses, and being dramaturgical and practical in character. Taking these into account yields a richer view of practice, and makes it possible to understand more readily why changing practice is not just a matter for practitioners alone, but a task of changing such things as the discourses in which practices are constructed and the social relationships which constitute practice. The article then offers suggestions about how changing practices might occur through public discourse among different kinds of people associated with particular practices (not just professionals alone), drawing on some of Habermas's insights into the nature of public spheres.

**Author Address**: skemmis@csu.edu.au

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# KNOWING PRACTICE: SEARCHING FOR SALIENCES[1]

Stephen Kemmis.[2]

In his (1977) *Philosophy and Methodology in the Social Sciences*, philosopher Barry Hindess wrote:

> Rationalist epistemology conceives of the world as a rational order in the sense that its parts and the relations between them conform to concepts and the relations between them, the concept giving the essence of the real. Where rationalist epistemology presupposes an *a priori* correspondence, a pre-given harmony, between ideas and the world, the rationalist conception of action postulates a mechanism of the realisation of ideas. For example, in Weber's conception of action as 'oriented in its course' by meanings, the relation between action and its meaning is one of coherence and logical consistency: the action realises the logical consequences of its meaning. Is it necessary to point out the theological affinities of this conception of action? While theology postulates God as the mechanism *par excellence* of the realisation of the word, the rationalistic theory of action conceives of a lesser but not essentially dissimilar mechanism (p.8).

In the professions today, there is a lively interest in the nature of "professional practice knowledge" (for example, Eraut, 1994; Hargreaves, 2000; Higgs, Titchen and Neville, 2001). There is a healthy debate about what this kind of knowledge is, how it is developed (both in the minds of professional practitioners and in the discourses and practices of communities of practice), and how it is used. I want to argue that this focus on professional practice *knowledge* may lead us towards what Hindess calls a rationalistic theory of action, and thus, potentially, into misunderstandings about the nature of *practice*. In particular, we may be led away from the crucial matter of practical *reasoning* (Gauthier, 1963; Schwab, 1969; Habermas, 1972, 1974; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Schwandt, 2002) – the way we think in the course of 'doing' a practice[3]. As a way of thinking, practical reasoning may indeed involve drawing on resources of what those authors call 'professional practice knowledge', but it involves drawing on more than that 'store' of knowledge. It also involves drawing on understandings about one's own and others' intentions, understandings, meanings, values and interests, and on one's own and others' reflexive, unfolding understandings of the situation in which one is practising at any given moment.

I want to describe the kind of thinking that is characteristic of the expert professional practitioner as *'searching for saliences'*. Expert practitioners search not only within their own store of professional practice knowledge for ideas relevant in understanding and acting in particular practice-situations, but also within the whole of their own life-experience. They search for ways of understanding and acting that will be appropriate in addressing the practical problems

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[2] Stephen Kemmis is Professor of Education in the School of Education, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales 2678, Australia. Email: skemmis@csu.edu.au

[3] Practical reasoning was distinguished by Aristotle from technical reasoning and theoretical reasoning. The *telos* or purpose of technical reasoning is the production of something, and it is characteristically guided by a disposition called *poietike* or 'making-action' (which we might today call a means-ends or instrumental disposition). The *telos* or purpose of theoretical reasoning, by contrast, is the attainment of knowledge for its own sake. The *telos* of practical reasoning is practical wisdom and knowledge and its characteristic disposition is *praxis* – 'doing-action'. See Carr and Kemmis, 1986, pp32-3.

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they meet at any particular time, drawing on their life-experience not in a static or rationalistic way, but *reflexively* – changing their reading of the situation as it unfolds in and through practice, in the light of changing perceptions, observations and ways of seeing the situation, and in the light of changes brought about by seeing how others see it, and how they are reacting and responding to changes as the situation unfolds. In short, the initial and unfolding 'shape' and content of *praxis* in any practical situation is highly *reflexive* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and expert practitioners are well aware of this reflexivity. Indeed, they deliberately explore this reflexivity in practice, especially when situations things that did not seem relevant when one first engaged the practical problem and the particular practice situations they meet seem different in some way. They know that things that might simply not have crossed one's mind initially will gradually or suddenly appear as relevant and useful in understanding and addressing *this* case, and as a further guide to unfolding action.

Expert practitioners not only have a store of professional practice knowledge that might be described as their *expertise*, but that they also have highly developed capacities to *search for saliences* that allow them to respond wisely and prudently to each situation, taking into account the likely consequences of their actions in relation to the many, often-competing or conflicting aims, understandings values, self-interests they bring to the situation and that others bring to it, and that reveal themselves in and through action and interaction – practice – in the situation as it unfolds.

As I will show, however, practices are not just activities undertaken by individuals. They have *extra-individual* features. These include social and discursive features that make them the collective 'property' of groups, not just the 'possessions' of individual practitioners. These extra-individual features are shaped through histories and traditions that locate practices in such a way that they are 'inherited' already formed by contemporary practitioners who, in their turn, become the custodians and developers of practices. Moreover, practices are not shaped by practitioners alone, but also by the expectations, intentions and values of clients and others the practices are intended to serve – groups that include not only particular individuals but also families, social groups and whole societies in whose interests the practice is conducted.

Since practices are constituted by these extra-individual features as well as through the action of individual practitioners, *changing practices is an extra-individual process*. Changing practices requires changing not only the actions of individuals but also making changes in the social, discursive and historical dimensions in which practices are constituted and re-constituted – as they evolve over time. This is inevitably a *political* process, extending beyond the responsibility of individual practitioners acting alone, though each undoubtedly can make contributions to the evolution of practices, and extending beyond the purview of bodies like professional associations that may regulate practices and accredit professional practitioners, though such bodies undoubtedly play important mediating roles in reshaping practices for contemporary times, in relation to the concerns of client groups, and in relation to government and civil society.

The paper concludes with the suggestion that practices can best be developed when they are understood as being shaped and re-shaped in *communities of practice*, especially where these communities are constituted as *public spheres* as described by Jürgen Habermas (1996, especially Ch.8) – that is, in communicative spaces in which people can converse openly, freely, critically and self-critically about the nature, meaning and consequences of what they are doing.

# 1.  DONALD SCHÖN – THE SELF-REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Donald Schön's (1983, 1987, 1991) notion of "the reflective practitioner" was grasped and pursued in many professions.  Like many others interested in action research, Schön argued that people came to understand their practices more deeply by investigating them.  Not only that:  they also learned how to improve their practices by carefully observing the nature and effects of their current actions.  Through the process of reflection, practitioners would create a kind of dialogue between their *knowledge and action*, and (something a little different, in my view) their *theories and practices*.  The process of reflection was seen as a deliberate way to get knowledge 'talking to' action, and theory 'talking to' practice.  Schön and others argued that there is or can be a feedback loop between theory and practice, with feedback going both ways:  both T←→P, not either T→P or P→T.

Building on his earlier work on reflective practice, Schön (1995) explored some of the implications of Ernest Boyer's (1990) notion of four forms of scholarship – the scholarship of *discovery*, the scholarship of *application*, the scholarship of *integration*, and the scholarship of *teaching*.  Schön argued that if universities are to really value other kinds of scholarship than the scholarship of discovery that underpins much university research, then they must find new ways of thinking about and valuing the knowledge inherent in the other forms of scholarship.  He argues that universities have a particular kind of "institutional epistemology" that causes them to prize the scholarship of discovery over other forms of scholarship, and that they need to develop different kinds of institutional epistemologies if they are properly to value the knowledge characteristic of other forms of scholarship.

Schön explores different conceptions of *professional knowledge* and the ways universities have regarded them, arguing that some disciplines in the university have come to be regarded as the "higher schools" when it comes to their hold on the knowledge most valued by the institution.  Schön wants to turn this kind of hierarchy on it head.  He argues for a new *epistemology of practice* that can give *practical knowledge* its proper recognition and reward.  Drawing on Michael Polanyi's (1962) concept of "tacit knowledge", he argues for a concept of *intelligence-in-action*.  Tacit knowledge, according to Polanyi, is a "subsidiary awareness of particulars" that is part of the deep knowledge of experts in a field, allowing them to see and understand patterns and signs that a naïve observer would most likely miss.  An expert may see patterns in the foggy detail of an X-ray that allows them to make a correct diagnosis that would probably be missed by a less experienced observer;  someone long familiar with a particular engine may hear sounds that are signs that it is working at the limits of its capacity.  Schön believes that these kinds of tacit knowing are elements of *"knowing-in-action"*.

From knowing-in-action, Schön develops a concept of *reflection-in-action*.  He cites John Dewey's idea of inquiry as "thought intertwined with action" as a precursor idea to his notion of reflection-in-action.  Reflection-in-action, Schön argues, is a deliberate strategy aimed at learning from experience, and, he believes, it is at the heart of knowledge about practice.  He argues that new forms of scholarship concerned with practice should use *action research* as the means by which practice can be known and understood.

He then gives examples of reflection-in-action and the kinds of knowledge developed in Project Athena at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).  He draws implications for organizational learning and the difficulty that "the problem of introducing and legitimizing in the university the kinds of action research associated with the new scholarship is one not only of the institution but of the scholars themselves" (p.33).  In other words, it is through the experiences and learned preferences of individual academics that the existing institutional epistemologies of universities have become established, and that it is therefore necessary to

change the knowledge and experience of academics if we want to establish new institutional epistemologies supportive of practice knowledge.

To anticipate a little, and to put it in terms of Bourdieu's theory of practice (for example, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), this might be to say that the university is currently a particular kind of *field* that tends to construct in those who work in them a particular kind of *habitus* (the capacities and predispositions of the actor that support the particular kind of play appropriate to a particular field), and that other kinds of habitus require different kinds of fields of play in which to grow and develop.

We should note, however, that when it comes to reflection in action Schön focuses rather relentlessly on the *individual* practitioner, and on that individual's *knowledge and action*. As just indicated, he plainly recognises that social settings and their "institutional epistemologies" create structures that constrain certain kinds of knowledge for individual researchers and practitioners, and that these accumulate in certain kinds of *theory* which may not adequately represent the knowledge of knowledgeable practitioners of the professions. And he argues that this professional knowledge might better be accumulated and developed in other kinds of institutions that may better recognise, respect and represent professional practitioners' knowledge in frameworks that might be described as new institutional epistemologies – or if not in other institutions, then in new kinds of institutional epistemologies within universities. This is an argument for a changed kind of relationship between universities and the professions in relation to understanding the nature and development of practice in the professions – and perhaps in other fields as well. (We will return to this question later in this paper.) But his focus on the individual practitioner, and his description of the social relations of the field surrounding that practitioner as an "epistemology" leads him to describe the social structure in which knowledge and action and theory and practice develop as a structure of knowledge (an epistemology), rather than as a social field.

## 2.  KNOWLEDGE FOR ACTION:  THEORISTS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE

Following Michael Eraut (1994), Higgs, Titchen and Neville (2001) want to find a way of characterizing practice knowledge that will overcome "the theory and practice divide" (p.4). Like Donald Schön, they object to any dualistic conceptualization of theory and practice. Moreover, like Schön (1995), they also want to explore the possibility of a distinctive epistemology of practice.

They outline three forms of knowledge that clinicians bring to the clinical encounter:

1.   propositional, theoretical or scientific knowledge – e.g., knowledge of pathology;

2.   professional craft knowledge or knowing how to do something;

3.   personal knowledge about oneself as a person and in relationship with others (p.5).

"Each form of knowledge has a distinct nature", they argue (p.5). They describe the nature and importance of each, and the blurred boundaries between them. They also indicate that professional practice knowledge expresses itself in unique and changing ways as individual practitioners encounter particular patients, situations and contexts.

In a way, the distinction between knowledge and action, on the one side, and between theory and practice, on the other, is embedded – it might be better to say 'buried' – within the threefold classification of forms of knowledge described by Higgs, Titchen and Neville. In short, like Schön, they view professional practice from the perspective of the individual

practitioner, and the knowledge necessary to underpin that practitioner's work (whether construed as 'action' or 'practice'). In fact, despite the richness of their understanding of practice as it occurs in different kinds of settings (their particular interest is the clinical setting), their brief encapsulation of different types of professional practice knowledge has more to say about knowledge (and action) than about the nature of either theory or practice, except in asserting that all of the other terms in the matrix below are related to the kind of practice to which the relevant 'professional practice knowledge' refers.

| | Individual realm | Social/public discursive realm |
|---|---|---|
| **Representation (or codification) and interpretation** | *Knowledge*<br>• 'propositional knowledge'<br>• 'know-how'<br>• 'personal knowledge' about oneself and in relationship with others | *Theory*<br>• 'theoretical or scientific knowledge'<br>• 'professional craft knowledge' |
| **Object (of private knowledge or of public theory)** | *Action*<br>• doing something (craft-related activity)<br>• relating to oneself and others | *Practice*<br>• clinical practice |

**Figure 1: A depiction of the view of professional practice knowledge offered by Higgs, Titchen and Neville (2001)**

The view put by Higgs, Titchen and Neville is a view (a theory) about what it means to 'know' practice. This is something different, I think, from what it means to *theorise* practice.

As far as 'knowing' is concerned (knowledge from the viewpoint of the individual knower or cognitive subject who is also the actor and subject of action), I would prefer to say that the things to be learned as the basis for 'professional practice knowledge'[4] are the things depicted in all the other cells in Figure 1 – namely,

- public knowledge relevant to the practice (theoretical, scientific),

- action (as an object of knowing or thought), and

- practice (as an object of public knowledge in the form of theory or 'scientific knowledge').

This may be no more than a little idiosyncratic 'thought-police' work – pushing the conceptual categories used by Higgs, Titchen and Neville into an alternative framework. I would prefer to think, however, that this formulation gives a more dialectical, non-dualistic rendering of the mutually-constitutive relationships, and the tensions and interconnections between

- *individual knowledge* and *knowledge in the public sense* (for example the collective knowledge of a community of practice, codified in a shared theoretical or scientific discourse) which are mutually-constituted over time,

- *individual action* and *social practices* which are mutually-constituted over time,

- a *knowing subject* and the *individual action* which is an object of that person's knowledge which are mutually-constituted over time, and

- a *collective knowing 'subject'* (for example, a local or broader professional, craft, scientific or other discursive community) and the *social practice* which is the object of its collective knowledge.

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[4] That is, to be known cognitively, and one might add, performatively and affectively or emotionally.

In each case, these relationships of mutual constitution occur through particular local and broader *histories* of action and interaction, representation and interpretation – histories in which particular individuals and groups are the actors, and the inheritors of actions, interactions, representations and interpretations by actors in the past (themselves and others who have gone before them in the field of practice). Also, in each case, they are mediated by

- processes of *representation* (or *codification*) and *interpretation* that give knowledge, theory, action and practice meaning, value and significance for *individuals*;

- *discourses and other social and cultural/symbolic factors* that give knowledge, theory, action and practice *shared* or *collective* meaning, value and significance; and

- the particular *traditions* of practice, reflection and research which have shaped the social and discursive codification of knowledge, theory, action and practice in different fields.

In my view, this framework offers a more productive space in which to theorise practice. It recognises that *both thought (knowledge) and action, both theory and practice, and both representations (codifications, and interpretations) and their objects are constituted in physical space, social space and discursive space in historical time.* The prime task of a theory of practice is to account for these relationships – that is, how each relationship of mutual constitution develops locally and more widely in space-time, and how each developing or unfolding relationship influences, constrains, stimulates and shapes the others.

Theories of practice that examine social and discursive factors shaping practice abound. Although there are many other candidate theories that might be discussed, I will mention here only those of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault.

## 3. PRACTICE IN SOCIAL AND DISCURSIVE SPACE: BOURDIEU AND FOUCAULT

Bourdieu's theory of practice (for example, Bourdieu 1977, 1990, 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) is immensely rich in demonstrations of the complex interdependencies and mutual determination of knowledge and action, theory and practice, and individual and collective subjects and their objects. Of course he rightly repudiates dualistic understandings of these dialectical relationships, and searches for theoretical formulations which permit him to capture these and other[5] dynamics in the constitution of practice.

I have too little space here to do justice to Bourdieu's formulation of practice. It involves not only action in time and space, but the intentions, meanings, values and understandings of the practitioner. It presupposes ideas about the nature and structure of the practice that are embedded in the practitioner's understandings of the practice, as in his notion of *habitus* as a historically- and institutionally-constituted predisposition to enter a setting able to be a 'player' in the kind of game this setting is a setting for (for example, a football field, or a government office), flexibly and openly, and with a 'practical sense' about what the setting might offer on this occasion (for example, opportunities to succeed or transgress). This habitus also connects to a *field* which is that dimension of a social setting that is the already-cultivated social ground that provides the social space and relations that permit the particular kind of practice we are concerned with to be practiced. In the case of a field of professional practice, the social field also involves social relations that reach out beyond the practitioner to the 'client' (for example, a student or a patient), to other professionals and the institutions of the profession, and to the

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[5] For example, the dualisms (which he opposes) of free-will and determinism, agency and structure, and system and actor – see Wacquant (1992, p.15).

sources of knowledge production that help form and inform the practice – like universities and other research institutions. Moreover, practice is shaped and re-shaped, constituted and re-constituted, in the developing lived experience of the practitioner. Practice is also shaped and re-shaped through the particular *histories* of this or that particular kind of practice. It is shaped and re-shaped through the life history of this particular practitioner, the history of the profession, and the histories of those other institutions that shape and constrain professional work – not to mention the history of the particular setting in which this particular practitioner practices. And, finally, practices are also shaped by words – by the *discourses* of professions and professionals that name and describe particular things in particular ways, noticing particular aspects of the world as relevant to their work and deflecting attention from others. These discourses guide and inform professional practice, offering ways of understanding how practice can be directed and corrected.

I refer to Bourdieu because, unlike the view of professional practice knowledge put by Higgs, Titchen and Neville, his view is intensely social. It contrasts sharply with the individualistic view of professional practice knowledge they offer, opening instead a vista of social relations in which the practitioner constitutes him or herself within and against a field already pre-constituted by social and discursive relationships – a field which itself evolves as people (practitioners) reshape it by transforming past ways of acting, and as local or new circumstances generate new possibilities for play and action.

I imagine Bourdieu's practitioner like a diver, one of a group, snorkels in mouths, eyes encased in goggles, swimming down into a coral reef to explore or to find who knows what. The social field they inhabit is as intensely *present* and real a medium as the water in which they swim[6].

Now I imagine the spaces filled by those divers as empty spaces – human-shaped holes in the water. The water around those holes is the medium investigated by the historian Michel Foucault (1970, 1972, 1977, 1979, 1990a, 1990b). Foucault reads practices by their artefacts – the documents and monuments they leave behind, structured by ideas, practices, regimes of truth, technologies of power.

In Foucault (as in other theorists of practice), we encounter the field of practice as structured *discursively* through ideas, words, and the disciplines that order ideas and words.

One of Foucault's major contributions is in showing how "disciplines" emerged as bodies of knowledge. But disciplines are not just bodies of knowledge; they involve *discursive and social relationships* that give them a particular character and their power. For example, they involve "discipline" in several senses. Three identified by Jan Goldstein (1984) are

> … a branch of knowledge; the particular modes of training to which the clientele of the professional is subjected; and finally the rigorous "disciplined" training to which the professional himself submitted (for everyone in the Foucauldian system, the supposed elite as well as the suppressed underlings, is equally in the thrall of "discipline") and through which he has gained mastery over a body of knowledge and has come to view his possession of this knowledge as entailing a serious commitment to a higher calling (p.179).

Goldstein is interested in applying Foucault's ideas about disciplines to the history of the professions. As Goldstein shows, knowledge itself evolves and develops over time – not just

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[6] To play with the metaphor, one might also say that, in a larger sense, those divers themselves are each largely constituted of water, and part of huge cycles of evaporation, condensation, precipitation (rain), and drinking that has water passing through their bodies in endless cycles of which they are the transitory bearers.

as a "canon" of ideas, but in a messy reality of historical, social and political relationships that are charged through and through with power. Foucault is interested in exploring how this power is structured, harnessed and exercised, especially in the disciplines. His general historical interest was in the formation of a number of key social institutions in the eighteenth century, as industrialization and social unrest brought large numbers of people into towns and cities from the country. A new problem of social order emerged: how to cope with this potentially dangerous mass, or *lumpen proletariat*. In response, workhouses, the police, hospitals and other institutions appeared, evolving somewhat abruptly into new shapes from their antecedents. Schools, too, took new and more definite shapes and social roles. What is intriguing – even astonishing – about this emergence of institutions is that they emerged with a structure that was, in part, a structure of ideas. The ideas of eighteenth-century France included powerful new ways of ordering knowledge. In *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences*, for example, Foucault showed how three ostensibly very different fields (grammar, natural history, and economics) shared powerful affinities and resemblances despite the differences in their subject matter and the objects of their investigations. The similarity came through a shared, then new and powerful, view about *representation* – what it means to represent the world in words, as an object of knowledge.

These shared ideas about representation emerged in the ordering of knowledge in a variety of fields, and they emerged as responses to order not only in the discursive or intellectual sense but also in the sense of ordering the relationships between the knowers of this knowledge and others – for example, the poor, patients, the insane, or criminals. The emerging disciplines were, or involved, what Foucault describes as *technologies of power*. These technologies are not just tools to be used or wielded by individuals; they embrace the user as the subject of this knowledge and the people or things that are the objects of the knowledge in a social field which the knowledge itself helps to shape and sustain. And the whole field develops, evolves and transforms through history, in response to developments in the work and politics of the society involved, and in the knowledge itself.

It would be wrong to characterise Bourdieu and Foucault as having simply complementary sets of ideas in the way my metaphor of the divers suggests. Of course they have very different ways of thinking about how social practice is shaped. I draw attention to them both, side by side, to draw attention to the realms of *the social* and *the discursive* as mediums which shape individuals, individuality and individuation so profoundly that it makes little sense to ask what the individual is *without* the social and discursive realms in which individuals exist. Bourdieu and Foucault are among those who draw attention to the *extra-individual* aspects of practice. Their views are in sharp contrast with the view of practice seen from the perspective of the knowledgeable practitioner envisaged by Higgs, Titchen and Neville. The views of Bourdieu and Foucault put as much emphasis on understanding the social and the discursive as factors in shaping practice as on cognitive factors – the knowledge or consciousness of the individual practitioner.

Of course it is true that individual practitioners of a profession gain access to the realms of the social and the discursive through experiencing the work of professional practice and through cognitively understanding its collective representations of the world and itself. And of course it is essential that professional practitioners (and practitioners of other kinds of activities like crafts, trades and other social practices) cognitively grasp some of the ways their worlds are shaped discursively and institutionally – I do not want to say that Higgs, Titchen and Neville are *not* pointing to these important aspects of practice knowledge. But, in a commonsense way, they are in danger of privileging knowledge 'in people's heads' over the social and discursive orders that support that knowledge. To avoid this danger, practitioners

wanting to understand the world of practice must also enter the discursive and social realms of practice at a meta-level – consciously seeing themselves as shaped by modes of practice and ideas about practice that are part of a shared social and discursive world with its own distinctive modes of structuration that exist 'outside' the heads of individual practitioners (even if they can only be apprehended cognitively – that is, by knowing subjects).

Understood against these social and discursive backgrounds, the propositional knowledge (theoretical or scientific knowledge), craft knowledge ('know how') and personal self-knowledge of professional practitioners seem less amenable to codification than they appeared at first sight. They present a substantial 'representation problem' (Lundgren, 1983) about how to select *what to teach* in the way of professional practice knowledge. They present a substantial problem because what needs to be known is not just what is in the heads of other or past practitioners; it is also extra-individual – features that exist in discursive and social realms that extend beyond the heads of individuals into the space-time, historically-constituted, social and discursive realms they inhabit.

I will explore this idea a little further by focussing on the second of the elements of professional practice knowledge identified by Higgs, Titchen and Neville – "craft knowledge".

## 4. CRAFT KNOWLEDGE REINTERPRETED

Following Gilbert Ryle's distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that", Higgs, Titchen and Neville describe one aspect of professional practice knowledge as "craft knowledge or knowing how to do something" (p.5). They are right to emphasise its importance – propositional knowledge alone cannot guide practice as (on a rationalistic theory of action) it might be presumed to do.

'Craft knowledge' is an old-fashioned label. The term is powerful and persuasive, however, because it draws on an ancient understanding of 'craft', invoking images of guilds of masons, midwives and others – embodied people who work with their hands to produce particular kinds of products or outcomes or states of affairs.

As already suggested, however, we cannot think adequately about a 'craft' without considering how it is shaped socially and discursively and, one might add, by particular kinds of material technologies. The craft, and more particularly the guild, are social and discursive orders – they involve disciplines in all of Foucault's senses of the term.

In addition to locating 'craft knowledge' in social and discursive space, I want to attend more closely to the dimension of *time*. Looked at from the perspective of the individual practitioner, 'craft knowledge' is different from the propositional knowledge that 'flattens' time into words. Craft knowledge involves understandings of *doing* – it is dynamic. It refers to sequences of action that take place in idiosyncratic forms in relation to particular materials, technologies, circumstances, and the particular intentions of the craftsperson and others relevant to the particular act of *making* involved in a particular case (for example, making a pot, making a poem, making someone healthy again). The action unfolds in time, and the skilled craftsperson responds relevantly and appropriately to the unique features of *this* unfolding, so the product is the best (most appropriate, most beautiful, most satisfying) that can be achieved under the circumstances. The person who knows the craft has a rich sense of how these unfoldings occur under a variety of circumstances, how things can go wrong, how one can intervene to avoid inadequate outcomes, how one can excel by reaching and extending the virtues and traditions of the craft. The skilled craftsperson has a sense of time in understanding the histories of particular acts of making as they occur in action, an

understanding of the history of the acts of making characteristic of the craft over time (a sense of the traditions of the craft), and a self-understanding of their own life histories as craftspersons whose craft knowledge and skills have been shaped and formed in the circumstances of their own lives.

In short, 'craft knowledge' is *dramaturgical* in character (it concerns things that unfold in time), it is *embodied* (requiring the 'hands-on' skills of the practitioner), and it is *practical* in the ancient Aristotelian sense.

The craft knowledge of the practitioner is located not only 'in the head' of the practitioner, but also in conditions of possibility shaped in and by social, discursive, moral, historical, biographical and institutional orders. They have extra-individual sources as well as an intra-individual. Some of these extra-individual sources are apprehended by the practitioner in the form of *dramaturgical* knowledge – knowledge of how things unfold and how they may or may not unfold under different circumstances.

Craft knowledge of a practice is also *situated knowledge* (see, for example, Benhabib, 1992, Chs.2 and 3, and Young, 1990). It is situated by the particular life histories of practitioners, and by the material, social, cultural, discursive conditions that shape the traditions of the practice as understood from the stand-point of any particular place in space and time.

Nevertheless, craft knowledge is also *embodied*. It is embodied in the life and work of each practitioner as practical skills of doing and making, not only in 'propositional knowledge'. One might say that it is knowledge not only 'in the head', but also in the hands, and in the heart. And, in another sense, it is real and material and, in a sense, determinate in the lived social history of relationships in which the practitioner participates; in the lived discursive history of words heard and spoken (generally words understood); in the lived relationship of the practitioner with the practice understood reflexively as not only personal activity, skill and capacity but also as the practice of a craft with its guild, with its institutions, with its characteristic traditions.

Craft knowledge is also *knowledge in the face of uncertainty* – or, perhaps one should say, it can or should include the *wisdom* and experience that guides one in uncertain circumstances. To say this is to draw attention to *practical reasoning* as a feature of the conduct of a practice. The experienced practitioner comes to practice equipped not only with skills and capacities to meet each new situation of making, but also with a particular kind of capacity to 'muddle through'. But this 'muddling through' is not just spontaneous, reactive and a matter of raw trial and error. In the skilled practitioner, it is a developed art – what Joseph Schwab (1969) called 'the art of deliberation'. It is the art of thinking through what might be done under these circumstances, in this place, at this time, with these general virtues in mind, and these particular intentions.

*Practical reasoning: reasoning about 'uncertain practical questions'*

Following the account of practical reasoning given by Gauthier (1963), William Reid (1978) outlines seven features of "uncertain practical questions":

> First of all, they are questions that have to be answered – even if the answer is to decide to do nothing. In this, they differ from academic, or theoretic questions which do not demand an answer at any particular time, or indeed any answer at all. Second, the grounds on which decisions should be made are uncertain. Nothing can tell us infallibly whose interests should be consulted, what evidence should be taken into account, or what kinds of arguments should be given precedence. Third, in answering practical questions, we always have to take into account some existing state of affairs. We are

never in a position to make a completely fresh start, free from the legacy of past history and present arrangements. Fourth, and following from this, each question is in some ways unique, belonging to a specific time and context, the particulars of which we can never exhaustively describe. Fifth, our question will certainly compel us to adjudicate between competing goals and values. We may choose a solution that maximises our satisfaction across a range of goals, but some will suffer at the expense of others. Sixth, we can never predict the outcome of the particular solution we choose, still less know what the outcome would have been had we made a different choice. Finally, the grounds on which we decide to answer a practical question in a particular way are not grounds that point to the desirability of the action chosen as an act in itself, but grounds that lead us to suppose that the action will result in some desirable state of affairs (p.42).

Knowledgeable practitioners do not rely on knowledge internal to a craft alone, or to knowledge codified in the traditions of their particular field of practice; they also rely on their capacity to 'read' situations in the light of what has happened in other situations. They understand the present situation not as unique, but against an experience of how things have turned out in the past, for better and for worse. Using the kind of reasoning identified by Aristotle as 'practical reason', they deliberate about what is to be done in the present situation taking a broad historical and social view of where things now stand.

Others contributors to this conference (Wilfred Carr, Joseph Dunne, Tone Saugstad and Thomas Schwandt) speak more eloquently than I about the Aristotelian conception of the practical, about practical action as it was distinguished by Aristotle from technical action, and about the particular character of practical reasoning. But practical reasoning also occurs in a context. In the case of practical reasoning in the course of conducting a particular practice, we can follow Alasdair MacIntyre (1981, 1988, 1990) who identifies several different kinds of orders in which practices are located (MacIntyre, 1981, Ch.15):

- *a biographical order* – what MacIntyre refers to as *"the narrative unity of a human life"* – which encompasses the unfolding of the practice and its associated virtues in the life-history of the practitioner, and the self-understanding of the practitioner of their practice in relation to the traditions of the field;

- *a moral order* which encompasses the distinctive *virtues* associated with a practice (the goods internal to the practice, which are to be distinguished from the 'goods' like money and status which are external to the practice;

- *an historical order* which encompasses the *traditions* of the practice, giving the practice and its associated virtues their meaning, value and significance; and

- *an institutional order* in which institutions are understood to stand in a double relation to practices, both sustaining them (as universities may sustain the practice of history or philosophy) and at times threatening them (as, for example, when the internal machinations of a university cause historians to be deprived of the resources needed to sustain the practice of history, or if the university distorts the evolution of the practice of history by displacing the virtues associated with the practice of history as touchstones for the conduct of the practice, for example by focussing to an inappropriate degree on external goods like money, power and status as indicators of the quality of the practice, or as if the rewards of money, power and status were essential to the practice).

These orders – especially the moral, the historical and the institutional – provide frameworks against which the actions of an individual practitioner should be understood and evaluated. They, too, point towards the extra-individual constitution of practices.

*Exploratory action and searching for saliences*

Reaching beyond the reasoning that leads to decisions about what to do, Mao Tsetung[7] (1971), in "The Important Thing is to be Good at Learning", advocated thinking methodically about situations, and changing one's plans as practice in the situation unfolds – when circumstances change, or when one faces setbacks. As in his essay "On Practice" in the same publication, he argues that people need to become more skilled and methodical at understanding situations in terms of the changing relationships between 'subjective conditions' and 'objective conditions'. Subjective conditions include the practitioner's own characteristic ways of thinking and interpreting situations, and the ways others in the situation appear to think and interpret them. Objective conditions include material circumstances, resources, and similar aspects of 'objective reality' – things to be taken into account in deciding how to act. Wise practitioners do not rely on the application of general principles alone; they make fresh readings throughout a particular course of action, referring regularly to the relationship between their (changing) 'subjective' interpretations and understandings, and the changing 'objective' circumstances in which they are acting.

In Mao's account, we find something more than in Reid's account of 'uncertain practical questions': a process of projecting beyond an initial decision situation through into action or practice – in reconnaissance and planning, in examining one's own and others' thinking, and in a notion of self-regulation that corrects or abandons a plan once it is in motion, in the light of changing subjective and objective conditions.

This projection into action, into practice, points to something I regard as a key feature of practice. It is not guided by *present* or *past* knowledge alone; it is also *exploratory* and open to self-correction in the light of changes and in the light of what one learns *in* and *through* practice (Kemmis and Brennan Kemmis, 2003). When people together make a plan for action in participatory action research, they envisage a future together, and begin making that future by putting their plan into action. But, by observing and evaluating (reflecting upon) their unfolding actions and the unfolding effects of their actions, they can correct their initial plans, amend them, or make new plans more likely to be apposite for the situation. Indeed, in the process of participatory action research, we argued, participants deliberately engage in *exploratory action* in order to learn about the possibilities and limits for transforming contemporary situations.

This is the sense in which I believe it is relevant to speak about practice in terms of *searching for saliences* (the subtitle of this paper). Wise practitioners set out in a course of action with some plan of what they are doing, reached on the basis of an initial 'diagnosis' (or reconnaissance) of the subjective and objective conditions in which they are working, and an understanding of the changing relationships between these subjective and objective conditions. Moreover, *they aim to develop an improved understanding between these subjective and objective conditions as their action unfolds* – by being continuously attentive to what happens, they aim to *explore* the practice, their understandings of the practice, and the social, discursive and material conditions of the practice.

In short, in addition to the propositional (scientific, theoretical) knowledge, the craft knowledge, and the personal knowledge envisaged by Higgs, Titchen and Neville in their account of professional practice knowledge, professional practice also entails an understanding (following Reid) that practice requires – and will always require – *practical reasoning* about uncertain practical questions, and (following Mao) that one prepares to engage in practical

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[7] Now generally spelled Mao Zedong. The Peking [Beijing] Foreign Languages Press spelling has been retained in this case, as in the reference cited at the end of this paper.

reasoning and in *exploratory action* not only at the start of a course of action but all the way through it. One might say that wise practitioners stay open-eyed (to changing objective conditions) and open-minded (about changing subjective conditions) – they set out to conduct their practice alert to whatever might become salient to their reading of themselves, their understandings and their situations, because these changing perspectives may – perhaps we should say "almost certainly will" – cause them to change their views about the nature of their initially-intended course of action and how things should unfold *in this particular case.*

So, it seems to me, we can think about "knowing practice" (the deliberately ambiguous title of this conference) in two senses: the sense in which a person comes to know what a particular kind of practice is, and in the sense of *being* "knowing", which means being aware and self-aware about how things are – a sense that one knows what one is doing when one engages in a practice, and reflexively becomes more knowing as one continues to practice.

## 5. DO WE NEED A NEW 'EPISTEMOLOGY OF PRACTICE'?

We might now return to the view of practice and practice knowledge advocated by Donald Schön – a view of practice knowledge as *reflection-in-action* or *reflective practice*, with which this view of exploratory action and 'searching for saliences' has strong affinities. Perhaps now, however, we will see practice and knowledge of practice as constituted not only in the knowledge and reflection of the practitioner, but also through historical processes of material, social, discursive and material formation that embrace the practitioner, the practice setting, and the practice itself, as codified for example in the guild or the profession. We might ask *not* for a revised "epistemology of practice" or "institutional epistemology", as Schön did, but for a plainer recognition of the different orders in which practices exist – material, social-political, and discursive orders, each shaped by its own history as well as in relation to the others. These extra-individual dimensions of practice reach beyond the 'knowledge in the head' of the practitioner and into the material, social-political, discursive space-time in which practices are conducted.

In the light of this understanding, it seems to me that, despite the loosening of ideas about research and scholarship advocated by Boyer, Schön was himself drawn back into the mire from which he sought to free practice, practice knowledge and the professions. By construing the solution as a new "*epistemology* of practice" he fell prey to the danger of reasserting the primacy of thought over action (the rationalistic conception of action), of theory over practice, and of the university over the professions – the very things he wanted to avoid. It is as if he wanted colleagues in the university to concede that worthwhile knowledge comes or can come out of sites of practice beyond the university's gates. Of course many – perhaps most – university people already do. They are well aware that practices and knowledge about practices exist in places other than universities, and that knowledge about particular kinds of practices is extended and crucially developed in those sites and institutions too.

This is the least that one could ask: to recognise that particular kinds of practice and knowledge about those practices are located and developed in other institutional settings than universities, with other human, social and discursive orders and histories than the ones universities represent. Part of the problem Schön sensed in the university – the problem of undervaluing professional knowledge – must surely be that, because of their role in the initial preparation and formation of professionals (but not in forming other craftspersons for the practice of their crafts), university people sometimes exaggerate the status of one kind of knowledge and theory about practice. Because university researchers are in the business of forming ideas and theories, perhaps they sometimes treat theoretical knowledge as being of most worth – as if what was of most worth in the academy were also of most worth in the

world beyond it. That was the idea of *theoria* that Aristotle cherished, but he also distinguished *theoria* from both *technical* action and reasoning and *practical* action and reasoning. It seems to me that the kind of distinction that Schön was seeking – one that distinguishes between forms of reasoning – has been available since Aristotle.

Schön's proper concern that reflective practice be recognised and respected more appropriately from the perspective of *some* people in universities is probably quite appropriate. But there are many institutions involved in practice that also nurture and sustain practices (and practitioners) where practice knowledge and theories of practice are held in high esteem. Among these are professional associations which frequently play roles in registering and regulating professions, professionals and the conduct and development of practices. There are other relevant bodies, too, that function like the guilds of former times (a Master Builders' Association might be one example). But these associations are sometimes thought to be too much concerned with the regulation of the professions or crafts in the interests of the professionals and craftspersons, and possibly against the interests of their clients or even the state. Though such questions should always be matters for critical examination, this critical wariness should not be regarded as disqualifying such bodies as appropriate in the codification, social organisation and development of practice. On the contrary, to varying degrees, such bodies usually serve to nurture and develop practice in the fields to which they refer.

Perhaps what is wanted to meet the concern underlying Schön's call for a new epistemology of practice is a greater mutuality of respect and recognition between the different kinds of sites where practice is discursively codified, socially organised and institutionally supported (where it is deserved, and in both directions). Such mutuality of respect (for all its vagaries) already exists in many relationships between professional bodies and universities – for example, where professional bodies accredit courses for the formation and development of the relevant professionals. With greater recognition and respect across these institutional boundaries, there might even be a stronger, richer and more constructive sense of mutual dialogue and discussion, so each contributes more effectively to the other, in particular in research and theory, and in professional education. Indeed, it seems to me likely that it is only when universities make exaggerated claims about the precedence of their particular views of knowledge, theory and practice that the kinds of concerns Schön described are troublesome. Where such circumstances arise, one might doubt the practical wisdom of the university people making the claims; instead, one would think, it would be wiser for university people to engage the relevant profession in more open and productive dialogue than bluntly to assert the primacy of academic knowledge of the profession on the grounds that universities, or some departments in them are "higher schools" (to use Schön's appellation). Under conditions of more open dialogue within professions, and between universities and professions, one might expect more fruitful development of knowledge and action, and theory and practice, through university research and through the kind of research that Schön describes as "reflective practice" or "reflection-in-action" – so long as "reflective practice" is well-supported by a profession or craft itself, and so long as there are conditions in which practitioners can learn from one another about how practice can be conducted under changing material, social, historical and discursive conditions..

## 6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICE THROUGH PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN PUBLIC SPHERES[8]

Universities, professional associations, guilds – all are examples of institutions that aim to nurture and develop different kinds of practices. We have already noted, however, that MacIntyre cautions that sometimes institutions also threaten the very practices they aim to nurture and sustain. We might also recall that Foucault sees the formation of disciplines in terms of "regimes of truth" and "technologies of power" that can limit and constrain practice, especially in the service of the (self-) interests of particular groups, and at the expense of other groups. We could recall, too, Bourdieu's views about the ways institutions operate to privilege certain kinds of thinking and practice in the interests of particular groups – for example, in his (1984) *Homo Academicus* – how universities preserve and extend the power of the "magisterial voice" of the professor. In short, we must take a critical view of the regulation of practices by institutions wherever they threaten to serve the self-interests of practitioners (especially professionals or members of guilds) at the expense of the interests of clients or others the practice is intended to serve (for example, students and the wider society, in the case of the practice and profession of education).

In late modern or postmodern, post-industrial, globalised societies like Australia, Sweden, the rest of Europe and North America, we are accustomed to strong technical and social divisions of labour – including hierarchies of status among professions and trades and other kinds of activities. We expect *not* to know other people's practices in any specialised sense, though we expect to be the clients for many of the services and complementary actors in the practices of many professions and trades. They have their specialised knowledge and skill, perhaps we have ours. They may serve their own legitimate interests in serving our interests, but they may also develop illegitimate collective self-interests (for example, when their profit counts for more in the service of our well-being than our legitimate interests in health or education or welfare or the provision of adequate food or shelter).

A contrasting view of knowledge is found in many other parts of the world, though it is also woven amongst the social fabric of those 'developed' parts of the world in the knowledge and action, and theory and practice, of ordinary people – including ourselves when we act collectively or in the light of communitarian values outside the preserve of our professional specialisations. Often in those other places, what knowledge counts is knowledge that is important for a *community*. Indeed, in many places in Indigenous Australia, knowledge and skill developed through education and training are frequently not highly valued when they are regarded as the privileged 'possession' of particular individuals. By contrast, they *are* highly valued when they are regarded as part of the *collective* knowledge and culture of the community. This does not mean that everyone in such communities needs to 'have' all of the relevant knowledge and skills in any deep sense; it simply means that the *place* of this knowledge and skill is recognised by a wide part of the community. Such knowledge and skills are valued as part of *collective community capacity*.

In a more abstract and attenuated sense, we non-Indigenous Australians, Swedes, Britons, North Americans and others also recognise the interdependence of knowledge and skills through the wider society, relying on medical practitioners, nurses, lawyers, biochemists, plumbers and the rest. But there may be less of a sense, in a globalised world, how these are situated in a *local* matrix of interdependence. The medical practitioner might move from my

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[8] This section of the paper draws from the (2003) paper Ros Brennan (Kemmis) and I presented at the *Congreso Internacional de Educación* (Congreso V Nacional y III Internacional), held in the Predio Ferial, Córdoba, Argentine Republic, October 9 – 11.

suburb, but medicine is likely to remain, personified and embodied in some other practitioner; the pharmacist may move, but pharmaceuticals are likely still to be available.  In marginal towns in rural Australia, however, some such certainties no longer exist, as globalisation of markets and modes of production leads to the depopulation of smaller towns, once vibrant communities.  And within the capital cities, there are new uncertainties as whole industries close down in Australia and move 'off-shore' to places with cheaper labour costs (the textile and clothing industry is one example).  At one and the same time, the matrix of interdependence becomes stretched and more globalised, and we become more acutely aware of how these globalised and globalising trends affect the collective capacity of local lives and livelihoods, the local economy, and local capacity.

In a recent national study of Indigenous vocational education and training, our research team (Kemmis, Atkinson, M., Brennan and Atkinson, C., 2003) became very sharply aware about how the education and training of individuals in Indigenous communities in Australia must be connected to community aspirations and community development – it must be seen as part of collective community capacity-building (see also Black, 2004).  In these communities, the sense that practices have a collective community value is very clear, and it is frequently the case that people will only become knowledgeable and skilful in various practices if the practice is one valued in terms of its capacity to support community cultural, social and economic development, and the maintenance and development of traditional lands ('country").  On the other hand, increasing numbers of Indigenous people have become knowledgeable and skilful in the same terms as non-Indigenous people, and have moved outside the preserve of the community practice of their own communities, but sometimes this is not without cost – it may also be counted as a loss to the community: "They went away for training and they never came back".

I draw attention to this communitarian view of collective capacity as locally-situated and locally-embodied to make a contrast – not too sharp, I hope – with contemporary globalised, post-industrial societies in which the sense of collective capacity is stretched and abstracted almost to the point where any sense of 'the collective' (or a 'common good') disappears.  In post-industrial societies, the 'here and now', and the 'face-to-face' of local community life *seem* to recede in importance by comparison with the vaster canvas of global relations in the economic, cultural and political realms.  We should remember, however, that, to be acted on and to be practiced, our knowledge and theory are always concretely situated in time and space, socially, discursively and historically.  This fact appears sometimes to escape notice, however, in the face of globalisation and the advanced social and technical divisions of labour characteristic of post-industrial societies.  In these societies, perhaps we have learned to suspend disbelief in the apparent irrelevance of the arcane, esoteric knowledges and expertise of others, on the view that *somehow* – in ways we don't immediately understand – those esoteric knowledges are relevant to our local social worlds.  Unlike specialist *knowledge* and *theory*, however, *action* and *practice* always make more intimate, embodied, situated connections with the local.  They involve complementary co-actors along with particular actors and practitioners – in the case of many professional practices, co-actors in the person of 'client'.  Practice thus demands justification in face-to-face and here-and-now terms.  If *this* therapy is not working, we want to know why, or at least want the therapist to use another that might be more effective.  If *this* practice of education does not work with our kids, or in our community, we want a form of education that *will* include, engage and enable (Kemmis, 2003) each individual, along with their family and community.  If *this* practice of history sustains misrepresentations of the lives of women, or Indigenous people, or people of colour, we want history that will properly tell their stories too, recognising and respecting difference – and we want better practices of history that will make such misrepresentation less likely in future.

This situated-ness and embodied-ness of practice where it meets people's lives means that there is a permanent demand for practice to justify itself to those it is intended to serve ('clients'), not only in terms of 'effectiveness' but also in terms of appropriateness (moral, social, historical).  There are always critical questions to be asked about the nature and conduct of particular *kinds* of practices, and about the nature and conduct of particular *instances* of practice (in this case, under these circumstances).  Moreover, asking and answering such critical questions is essential in relation to *changing (transforming)* practices – whether about the need for change, or the appropriateness of changes made.

If practice is not just the action of individuals, but has extra-individual features, then *changing practices is not just a question of changing individuals but also a social, discursive, historical process – it requires changing the social, discursive and practical conditions that support and structure the practice.* Changing practices thus requires collective interventions into the social, discursive and practical conditions under which practices are formed, structured and re-structured.  In the longer term, changing practices in the richer, individual-plus-social sense of the term requires collective transformation, not just transformation of what individuals do, and not just transformation of their individual professional practice knowledge (in the sense of their expertise or knowledge 'in their heads').

A variety of approaches to collective transformations of this kind are possible.  OA usual, liberal approach is through the initial and continuing professional education of practitioners.  Another, more autocratic approach is through change directed from professional bodies.  A third, more bureaucratic approach is by changing regulations governing the conduct of practice – through state regulatory agencies, for example.  Another approach is through a directly collective or communitarian approach which aims to involve those involved in the conduct of the practice – in principle, not only professionals but also their clients and interested and affected people in the wider society they aim to serve[9].

This last approach to the transformation of practices can helpfully be understood by considering practices from the perspective of a *community of practice*.  By this, I do not mean only a 'community of practitioners', like a professional body.  I want to leave 'membership' of the community of practice more open and undefined – or, rather, to allow it to be defined in practical cases, when groups of people together thematise some problem or issue about the nature and conduct of a particular practice and consider how it might be changed to better suit changed or different circumstances (for example, a changed client group, or changed possibilities for the practice offered by some new approach or technology, or changed understandings about the medium- or long-term consequences of a particular practice, or changed social or economic conditions affecting professionals or their clients or the wider society).

This approach to the collective transformation of practices can be understood in terms of Jürgen Habermas's notion of the *public sphere*.  This notion envisages "community" not in a romantic or *Gemeinschaft* sense, but in the sense of a community of practice that opens itself to examination and self-examination in different ways – one of which can be productively explored using the notion of *communicative space*.

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[9] These different groups are frequently referred to as 'stakeholders'.  This formulation helpfully draws attention to the range of different kinds of (self-) interests at play in the social formation and the conduct of practices (and policies and programs) but often gives short shrift to the broader public interest and notions of the public good which underlie all practices worthy of the name.

*Public spheres*

In Chapter 8 of his (1996) *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas outlines the kinds of conditions under which people can engage in *communicative action* (that is, action oriented towards reaching intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding, and unforced consensus about what to do in a particular practical situation) in the context of social movements. He does so by referring to what he calls *public spheres*.

The public spheres he has in mind are not the kinds of communicative spaces of most of our social and political communication. Communication in very many political contexts is frequently distorted and disfigured by interest-based bargaining – that is, by people speaking and acting in ways guided by their own self-interests and their own goals. Nor is he referring to "civil society" as a whole, or to particular public places.

Public spheres, as Habermas describes them, are places where communication is of a rather special kind. In his view, public spheres have a particular kind of character as *social and political spaces*, in which participants relate to each other in particular, *non-institutionalised* ways, and in which their contributions, while not following particular rules, are guided by the aspirations of communicative action. Kemmis and Brennan Kemmis (2003) identified the following ten key features of public spheres as he defines them. These are the conditions, I believe, under which practitioners, as members of a "community of practice" can critically examine the nature and consequences of their practices in the face of some problem or issue that has arisen, suggesting that a transformation of the practice might be necessary.

In professional settings where a group of professionals is examining issues or themes of concern about how their practice might need to be transformed in the light of changing circumstances or previously unrecognised untoward consequences, perhaps greater intersubjective agreement and mutual understanding can be expected, to the extent that the practitioners 'speak the same language' in their professions. But the conditions of communication in public spheres also apply to other kinds of settings in which people address common problems or themes – certain kinds of community meetings, for example. And it is possible that practitioners and their clients could also form public spheres of this kind to explore the nature and consequences of, and problems and issues in, various kinds of professional practices – though in these cases, there is a constant danger of deference to professional status and discourses.

There are many prototypical examples of public spheres in which professionals and clients together explore the nature, appropriateness and consequences of professional practices – for example in meetings of consumer or client advocacy groups with mental health practitioners, or parents' associations meeting with schools and teachers, or in public debates about social or environmental policies or practices. One might ask "what makes these public spheres so important, and why they play such an important role in establishing solidarities among participants and building legitimacy for decisions?" I will try to answer this question by referring to ten key features of public spheres as Habermas describes them.

I will enumerate the features of public spheres relating each to the example of the Córdoba Congress at which the ideas were presented (Kemmis and Brennan Kemmis, 2003). The 8,000 teachers who gathered in Córdoba for the Congress on Education in October 2003 opened a shared communicative space to explore the nature, conditions and possibilities for change in the social realities of education in Latin America. When they did so, they created open-eyed and open-minded social relationships in which participants were jointly committed to gaining a critical and self-critical grasp on their social realities and the possibilities for

changing the educational practices of their schools and universities to overcome the injustice, inequity, irrationality and suffering endemic in the societies they live in.  While not claiming that the case perfectly realises the ideal type of the public sphere, it seems to me that the participants in the Córdoba Congress created the kind of social arena that is appropriately described as a public sphere.

*Features of public spheres*

1.  Public spheres are *constituted as actual networks of communication among actual participants*.  We should not think of public spheres as entirely abstract – as if there were just one public sphere.  In reality *there are many public spheres.*

   The Córdoba Congress brought together about 8,000 teachers, students, education officials and invited experts in various fields.  For the three days of the Congress, they constituted an overlapping set of networks of communication that could be regarded as a large but highly interconnected and thematised set of conversations about contemporary educational conditions and contemporary educational practices in Latin America.  They were exploring the question of how current educational practices and institutions continue to contribute to and reproduce inequitable social relations in those countries, and how transformed educational practices and institutions might contribute to transforming those inequitable social conditions.

2.  Public spheres are *self-constituted*.  They are formed by people who get together *voluntarily*.  They are also *relatively autonomous* – that is, they are outside formal systems like the formal administrative systems of the state.  They are also outside the formal systems of influence that mediate between civil society and the state – like the organisations that represent particular interests (a farmers' lobby, for example). They are constituted by people who want to explore a particular problem or issue – that is, around a particular theme for discussion.  Communicative spaces or communication networks organised as part of the communicative apparatus of the economic or administrative sub-systems of government or business would *not* normally qualify as public spheres.

   People attended the Córdoba Congress voluntarily.   Despite the usual complex arrangements for people to fund their attendance, and sponsorship of students and others who could not afford to attend (about 800 of the 8,000 attendees received scholarships to subsidise their attendance), the Congress remained autonomous of particular schools, education systems, or states.  The administrative apparatus of the Congress is not 'owned' by any organisation or any state, though its core administrative staff is based at Dr Alejandro Carbó Normal School.  It is coordinated by a committee of educators based in Córdoba, and advised by an Academic Committee composed of people from many significant Argentinean education organisations (like the Provincial Teachers' union, universities, and the National Academy of Sciences based in Córdoba).  Arguably, however, the structuring of the Congress as a self-financing economic enterprise (as distinct from its connection with a broader social and educational movement) jeopardises the extent to which it might properly be described as a public sphere.

3.  Public spheres frequently come into existence in response to *legitimation-deficits* – that is, they frequently come into existence because potential participants do not feel that existing laws, policies, practices, or situations are legitimate.  In such cases, participants do not feel that they would necessarily have come to the decision to do things the ways they are now required to do them.  Their communication is aimed at exploring ways to overcome these legitimation-deficits by finding alternative ways of doing things that will attract their informed consent and commitment.

   The people attending the Córdoba Congress generally shared the view that current forms of education in Latin America serve the interests of a kind of society that do not meet the

needs of most citizens – that current forms of schooling are not legitimate in terms of the interests of the majority of students and their families. They wanted to explore alternative ways of doing education that might better serve the interests of the peoples of Latin America (hence the theme for the Congress "Education: A Commitment with the Nation").

4.  Public spheres are constituted for *communicative action* and for *public discourse*. Usually, they involve face-to-face communication, but they could be constituted in other ways – via email or the worldwide web, for example. Public discourse in public spheres has a similar orientation to communicative action – it aims towards intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding and unforced consensus about what to do. Thus, communicative spaces organised for essentially instrumental or functional purposes – to command, to influence, to exercise control over things – would *not* ordinarily qualify as public spheres.

In the Córdoba Congress, people came together to explore ways of conceptualising a reconstructed view of schooling and education for Latin America at this critical moment in the history of many of its nations. The point of the Congress was to share ideas about how the current situation should be understood, and how it was formed; and to consider ideas, issues, obstacles and possible ways forward towards forms of education and schooling that might, on the one hand, overcome some of the problems of the past and, on the other, help in shaping forms of education and schooling that would be more appropriate to the changed world of the present and future. Participants at the Congress presented and debated ideas; they explored social, cultural, political, educational and economic problems and issues; they considered the achievements of programs and approaches that offered alternative 'solutions' to these problems and issues; and they aimed to reach critically-informed views about how education and schooling might be transformed to overcome the problems and address the issues they identified – in the sense that they aimed to reach practical decisions about what might be done in their own settings, when participants returned from the Congress.

5.  Public spheres aim to be *inclusive*. To the extent that communication between participants is *exclusive* doubt arises about whether it is in fact a 'public' sphere. Public spheres are attempts to create communicative spaces that include not only the parties most obviously interested in and affected by decisions, but also people and groups peripheral to (or routinely excluded from) discussion in relation to the topics around which they form. Thus, essentially private or privileged groups, organisations and communicative networks do *not* qualify as public spheres.

The Córdoba Congress aimed to be broadly inclusive. It is a Congress described by its Coordinator María Nieves Díaz Carballo as a congress "by teachers for teachers", but it nevertheless included many others involved in and affected by education and schooling in Latin America – students, education officials, invited experts, representatives of a range of government and non-government organisations, and others. It aimed to include all of these different kinds of people as friends and as contributors to a common cause – creating new forms of education and schooling better suited to the needs of the present and future in Latin America and the world.

6.  As part of their inclusive character, public spheres tend to involve communication in *ordinary language*. In public spheres, people deliberately seek to break down the barriers and hierarchies formed by the use of specialist discourses and the modes of address characteristic of bureaucracies that presume a ranking of the importance of speakers and what they say in terms of their positional authority (or lack of it). Public spheres also tend to have only the weakest of distinctions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (they have relatively permeable boundaries and changing 'membership'), and between people who are relatively disinterested and those whose (self-) interests are significantly affected by the topics under discussion. Thus, the communicative apparatuses of many government and business organisations, and organisations that rely for their operations on the specialist expertise of some participants do *not* ordinarily qualify as public spheres.

At the Córdoba Congress, many speakers used specialist educational (and other) discourses to discuss their work or ideas, but much of the discussion took place in language deliberately intended to be inclusive and engaging for participants – to share ideas and open them up for debate, without assuming that hearers were 'fluent' in specialist discourses for understanding either the socio-political context of education in Latin America or the technical aspects of contemporary education in Latin American countries. More particularly, the languages used at the Congress (including translations from English and Portuguese) were inclusive because they were directed specifically towards fostering the shared commitment of participants about the need for change, and the obstacles and possibilities ahead if participants wanted to join the shared project of reconstructing education in Argentina and elsewhere. Specialist discourses were used to deal with specific topics (in philosophy, social theory and curriculum, for example), but the conversation about those topics soon shifted register to ensure that ideas were accessible to any interested participant.

7.  Public spheres presuppose *communicative freedom*: in public spheres, participants are free to occupy (or not occupy) the particular discursive roles of speaker, listener and observer, and they are free to withdraw from the communicative space of the discussion. Participation and non-participation are voluntary. Thus, communicative spaces and networks generally characterised by obligations or duties to lead, follow, direct, obey, remain silent or remain outside the group could *not* be characterised as public spheres.

The Córdoba Congress engendered conditions of communicative freedom. While the Congress program and timetable privileged particular participants as speakers at particular times, the vast conversation of the Congress, within and outside its formal sessions, in formal and informal communication, presupposed the freedom of participants to speak, to listen, to observe and to withdraw from particular discussions. Conversations were open and critical, inviting participants to explore ideas and possibilities for change together.

8.  The communicative networks of public spheres generate *communicative power* – the positions and viewpoints developed through discussion will command the respect of participants not by virtue of obligation, but the power of mutual understanding and consensus. Communication in public spheres thus creates legitimacy in the strongest sense – the shared belief among participants that they freely and authentically consent to the decisions they arrive at. Thus, systems of command or influence, where decisions are formed on the basis of obedience or self-interests would *not* ordinarily qualify as public spheres.

The Córdoba Congress was infused by a growing sense of shared conviction and shared commitment about the need and possibilities for change in education in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America. On the other hand, the impetus and momentum of the developing sense of shared conviction may have been more fragile and transitory because the Congress was just a few days long (though building on the momentum from previous Congresses and other work participants were doing towards the same transformative ends). Seen against the broader sweep of education and educational change in education in Latin America, however, it is clear that the Congress was drawing on, refreshing and redirecting

longstanding reserves of critical educational progressivism in the hearts, minds and work of many people who attended.

The shared conviction that new ways of working in education are necessary generated a powerful and almost tangible sense of *solidarity* among participants in the Congress – a powerful and lasting shared commitment to pursuing the directions suggested by the discussions and debates in which they had participated.  They also generated an enduring sense of the *legitimacy* of decisions taken by participants in the light of shared exploration of their situations, shared deliberation and shared decision-making.

9.  Public spheres do not affect social systems (like government and administration) *directly*; their impact on systems is *indirect*.  In public spheres, participants aim to change the climate of debate, the ways things are thought about, how situations are understood.  They aim to generate a sense that alternative ways of doing things are possible and feasible – and to show that some of these alternative ways actually work, or that the new ways do indeed resolve problems or overcome dissatisfactions or address issues.  Groups organised primarily to pursue the particular interests of particular groups by direct intervention with government or administrative systems would *not* ordinarily qualify as public spheres.  Similarly, groups organised in ways that usually serve the particular interests of particular groups even though this may happen in a concealed or 'accidental' way (as frequently happens with news media) do *not* ordinarily qualify as public spheres.

The Córdoba Congress operated outside the functional frameworks of education and state systems, and aimed to change the ways education and schooling are understood and practised indirectly rather than directly.  No state agency sponsored controlled the Congress – as indicated earlier, it is a Congress created and maintained by its organisers as a congress "by teachers for teachers".  On the other hand, state officials (like the Minister of Education for the Province of Córdoba, Amelia López, and the Argentinean Federal Minister of Education, Daniel Filmus) addressed the Congress, encouraging participants in their efforts to think freshly about the educational problems and issues being confronted in schools and in Argentina.  The size, success and generativity of previous Congresses was well-known (the 2003 Congress was the fifth national and third international congress held in Córdoba), and it is reasonable to assume that representatives of the state would want to endorse the Congress even if some of the ideas and practices being debated and developed by participants were at the periphery of, or even contrary to, state initiatives in education and schooling.  Of course it is also true that many of the ideas and practices discussed at the Congress like those concerned with social justice in education were generally in the spirit of state initiatives, though most Congress participants appeared to take an actively and constructively critical view of the forms and consequences of contemporary state initiatives in schooling.

10.  Public spheres frequently arise in practice through (or in relation to) the communication networks associated with *social movements* – that is, where voluntary groupings of participants arise in response to a legitimation-deficit, or a shared sense that there is a social problem has arisen and needs to be addressed. It is nevertheless the case that the public spheres created by some organisations (like Amnesty International, perhaps) can be long-standing and well-organised, and that they can involve notions of (paid) membership and shared objectives. On the other hand, many organisations (like political parties and interest-groups) do *not* ordinarily qualify as public spheres for reasons already outlined in relation to other items on this list, as well as because they are part of the social order rather than social movements.

In the Córdoba Congress, there was a strong sense of connection to a broad social movement for change in Latin American education and societies.  Endemic corruption, ill-considered economic adventures, anti-democratic practices, the denial of human rights, and entrenched social inequity in a number of Latin American countries are opposed and critiqued by many progressive people including many teachers and educationalists, and there was – and

is – a hunger for alternative forms of education that might prevent the tragic inheritance of previous regimes (including escalating national debt, fiscal crises, impoverishment, and the collapse of services) from being passed on to rising generations of students and citizens. The negative/critical and positive/constructive aspects of the educational movement represented in and by the Congress are connected to a wider social movement for change, but they are also a particular and specific source of intellectual, cultural, social, political and economic ideas and practices that make a distinctive contribution to the shape and dynamics of the wider movement. The Congress itself is now something of a rallying-point for progressive and critical teachers and educationalists, but it remains determinedly and politely independent of the state and commercial sponsors that might seek to exercise control over or through it. Its organisers are convinced that their best chance for changing the climate of thinking about education and society is to remains independent of the state machinery of social order, and to strive only for an indirect role in change – by having a diffuse role in changing things "by the force of better argument" rather than striving to make change through the administrative power available through the machinery of the state, or (worse) through any kind of coercive force. The Congress also expresses, not only in its written materials but also in its climate and culture, a profound sense of passion, hope and joy – participants clearly regard it as an opportunity to celebrate possibilities and achievements in creating new forms of education aimed at making (and speaking and writing into existence) a better future.

These ten features of public spheres describe a space for social interaction in which people strive for intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding and unforced consensus about what to do, and in which legitimacy arises. These are the conditions under which participants regard decisions, perspectives and points of view reached in open discussion as compelling for – even binding upon – themselves. Such conditions are very different from many other forms of communication – for example, the kind of functional communication characteristic of social systems (which aims at achieving particular ends by the most efficient means) and most interest-based bargaining (which aims at maximising or optimising self-interests rather than making the best and most appropriate decision for all concerned).

These conditions are ones under which practical reasoning and exploratory action by a community of practice are possible – theorising, research and collective action aimed at changing practices, understandings of practices, and the settings and situations in which practice occurs. They are conditions under which a loose affiliation of people can gather to address a common theme based on contemporary problems or issues, aiming to inform themselves about the core practical question "what is to be done?" in relation to the formation and transformation of practice, practitioners, and the settings in which practice occurs, at particular times and in particular places.

As already suggested, such communities of practice sometimes come into existence when advocacy groups believe that problems or issues arise in relation to a program or policy or practice, and that change is needed. An example would be the kind of collaboration that occurs when a group of mental health service clients meet with mental health service providers and professionals to explore ways to improve mental health service delivery at a particular site. Another example is the project work of groups of teachers and students conducting participatory action research investigations into problems and issues in schooling. Another is the kind of citizens' action campaign that sometimes emerge in relation to issues of community well-being and development, or environmental or public health issues. This approach to the transformation of practice understands that changing practices is not just a matter of changing the ideas of practitioners alone, but also changing the social, cultural, discursive and material conditions under which the practice occurs, including changing the

ideas and actions of those who are the clients of professional practices, and the ideas and actions of the wider community involved in and affected by the practice. This approach to changing practice, through fostering public discourse in public spheres, is also the approach to evaluation advocated by Niemi and Kemmis (1999) under the rubric of 'communicative evaluation' (see also Ryan, 2003).

## 7.  CONCLUSION

This paper opened with an invocation of Barry Hindess's notion of a 'rationalistic conception of action' as guided by thought – as if action, in essence, were merely the expression or realisation of a thought that guides it. It aimed to show that some theories of 'professional practice knowledge' risked adopting a rationalistic conception of action, as if the professional practice knowledge of a professional practitioner were the principal guide to professional practice.

In Part 1 of the paper, Donald Schön's (1995) notion of "reflective practice" was discussed, along with his appeal for "new epistemologies of practice" that might better characterise reflective practice in the professions. In Part 2, the threefold classification of professional practice knowledge offered by Higgs, Titchen and Neville (2001) was briefly outlined: *propositional knowledge*, *craft knowledge*, and *personal knowledge*. It was argued that their view of professional knowledge did not adequately distinguish and inter-relate knowledge and action as distinct from theory and practice. In Part 3, drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, it was suggested that *practice is formed by social relations and discursive codifications (representations) that are extra-individual* – that is, not to be understood solely in terms of the knowledge 'in the heads' of practitioners, but also in relations in social and discursive space that embrace individuals but also as conditions which shape thought and action, and theory and practice, in ways not necessarily grasped by individual practitioners or, more generally, by participants in social interactions. Thus, generally speaking, professional practitioners' knowledge of their practice is not sufficient to describe practice – another part of practice is that which exists outside the heads of professionals, in extra-individual social and discursive orders that professional practitioners may apprehend and influence, but that are not subject to control by those practitioners alone.

In Part 4, the notion of 'craft knowledge' (one of the three forms of professional practice knowledge identified by Higgs, Titchen and Neville) was considered. It was argued that craft knowledge is knowledge that unfolds in time – that it is *dramaturgical* in character, *embodied* (in the hands-on skill and the person of practitioners), *situated* in time and place, and *practical*. Being practical, it involves ideas of virtue, tradition, the narrative unity of a human life, and it is frequently associated with (though sometimes threatened by) the institutions which sustain and nurture it. Moreover, it involves *practical reason* as this has been understood since Aristotle, and as described (in Part 4) by William Reid in his (1978) discussion of "uncertain practical questions". It was argued that craft knowledge is also *knowledge in the face of uncertainty* that requires not only practical deliberation *before* action begins but also *exploratory action* that is open-eyed, open-minded and continuously reflective and reflexive about the nature and consequences of practice revealed in practice as it unfolds. Thus, it was argued, professional practice knowledge is always radically incomplete – though wise practitioners may have relevant knowledge in advance, they will always need to learn from their action, and correct it in the light of changing circumstances – and to plan this learning as part of their practice.

It was argued that the practitioner cannot rely on prior professional practice knowledge alone, but must also "search for saliences" (the subtitle of this paper) – that is, search for knowledge in and through practice to correct and amend practice in the light of changing

circumstances and new perspectives.  We might thus hope for practitioners who hope not only to "know practice", but also develop a "knowing practice" – a form of practice that is alert to the ways knowledge and theory develop in and through practice.  Another way to describe this might be to say that we hope for practitioners who will be more reflexive about the reflexivity of their practice – that is, to develop a kind of meta-reflexivity that understands that their practice is not only shaped by their rational action, guided by their prior professional knowledge, but also alert to (and engaged with) the material, social, discursive and historical conditions that shape their practice in any particular case, at any particular time.

In the light of these considerations, Part 5 returned to the question of whether new epistemologies of practice (as advocated by Schön) are needed.  It was argued that what is needed is not so much "new epistemologies of practice" – which may simply assert the priority of knowledge and theory in the dialectics of knowledge and action and theory and practice, but more open communication between universities and other sites and associations where practice is nurtured, sustained and developed – more open communication about what is needed to develop practice in any particular place and time.

This argument was extended in Part 6, where it was argued that universities, professional associations and guilds need to develop their understandings and justifications of practice in open communication.  It was argued that practices should be understood in relation to a notion of 'collective capacity', more readily comprehended in some traditional societies and in community settings than it is in the formal organisational and institutional structures and relations of globalised, post-industrial societies.   It was suggested that the kind of communication needed in the transformation of practices in both *individual and extra-individual* terms might be that advocated by Habermas (1996) in his account of *public discourses* in *public spheres* – discourses aimed at intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding, unforced consensus about what to do, and opening communicative space between people who want to discuss common themes and issues.  Ten features of public spheres were outlined, with a brief exemplification of what each might mean by reference to the conduct of a conference held in Córdoba, Argentina.

Of course one should also conclude that it is important to prepare professional and other practitioners with knowledge appropriate to the conduct of their practice.  There is much good sense in the threefold view of professional practice knowledge outlined by Higgs, Titchen and Neville.   Understanding practices through the lens of professional practice knowledge will not be enough, however, if what is wanted is the improvement of professional practice.  Perhaps the emphasis on professional practice knowledge in recent literature on practice reflects the preoccupations of authors concerned with the problem of preparing *neophyte* practitioners for the life and work of professional or other practice.  These authors want to know what needs to be in their curricula, and what needs to be 'in the heads' of their students and graduates when they go out to practice, but conceptualising what can be known in advance of practice captures only some of the features of the practices with which they are concerned.  Harder to capture are the material, social, discursive and historical conditions and relations that shape and sometimes disfigure practice;   the requirement for practical deliberation and exploratory action that are or should be the stock in trade of the wise practitioner;  and the need for continuing public discourse in open public spheres to justify and transform practice in the light of changing material, social, discursive and historical conditions.

To emphasise this is to say something more than that neophyte practitioners should expect the unexpected, anticipate the unanticipated, and prepare to learn by deliberate

exploration in and of practice. It is to say that to develop practitioners, practices, understandings of practice, and the changing settings of practice requires not only personal reflection-in-action but also collaborative efforts by practitioners and those they serve to explore and grasp the complex and uncertain material, social, discursive and historical conditions of practice. Schön's view of reflection in action is a way individual practitioners can begin to prepare themselves for this kind of 'knowing practice'; Habermas's notion of public discourse in public spheres offers another – a kind of communication in which contemporary problems and issues of practice are thematised for collective practical action by members of a profession or craft, or by those groups in collaboration with the 'clients' of a practice and others involved in and affected by the practice. It is also to assert that practitioners should prepare themselves to engage in participatory, collaborative transformation of their practices in ways that anticipate and build solidarity among those participating in the discourse, and that anticipate and build legitimacy for the decisions they take in the endless critical task of transforming practices to meet the changing needs and changing circumstances of different times, different people, and different places.

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